



# To Prompt or Not to Prompt: Possible Impacts of AI in the Generation of Fiction

Promptear o no promptear: Posibles impactos de la IA en la generación de ficción

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## ABSTRACT

Recent advances in generative artificial intelligence have made the production of literary fiction accessible to many users, enabling the individualized creation of fiction for personal consumption. This article examines the individual and cultural implications of AI-assisted fiction through a multidisciplinary framework. Drawing on a method triangulation, the study focuses on five dynamics likely to be disrupted by AI-generated fiction: democratization, customization and filter bubbles, connection and solitude, creativity, and the effects on professional writers. While AI-generated fiction holds democratizing potential by lowering barriers to literary production and enabling personalized learning, emotional regulation, and self-reflection, it also raises concerns regarding cultural fragmentation and the reinforcement of individual filter bubbles. Further, customized fiction may change experiences of empathy and connectedness, potentially substituting social interaction with parasocial or self-referential engagement. Finally, the article considers the ambiguous status of creativity in AI-assisted writing and the challenges posed to professional authorship and copyright rules. Overall, the findings suggest that fiction generated with AI neither constitutes a purely emancipatory nor a purely disruptive force; rather, its societal impact will strongly depend on how these technologies are integrated, regulated, and taught within educational and cultural contexts.

## RESUMEN

Avances recientes en la Inteligencia Artificial (IA) Generativa han hecho la producción de ficción literaria accesible a muchos usuarios, facilitando la creación individualizada de ficción para consumo personal. Este artículo examina las implicaciones individuales y culturales de la ficción asistida por IA en un marco multidisciplinario. Basados en un método de triangulación, el estudio se enfoca en cinco dinámicas que probablemente serán afectadas por la ficción generada con IA: democratización, personalización y filtros burbuja, conexión y soledad, creatividad, y los efectos en los escritores profesionales. Si bien la ficción generada por IA posee un gran potencial democratizador al reducir las barreras de ingreso a la producción literaria y facilitando el aprendizaje personalizado, regulación emocional y auto-reflexión, también presenta preocupaciones con respecto a la fragmentación cultural y el refuerzo de filtros burbuja individuales. Adicionalmente, la ficción personalizada puede reestructurar nuestras experiencias de empatía y conectividad, potencialmente sustituyendo las interacciones sociales con interacciones parasociales o auto-referenciales. Finalmente, el artículo considera el status ambiguo de la creatividad en la escritura asistida por IA y los desafíos que presenta a las reglas de autoría y derechos de autor profesionales. En resumen, los resultados sugieren que la ficción generada con IA no constituye una fuerza puramente emancipatoria ni una fuerza puramente destructiva; es mejor decir que su impacto en la sociedad depende de cómo estas tecnologías sean integradas, reguladas y enseñadas en contextos educacionales y culturales.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Artificial Intelligence, Creation, Fiction, Reading, Education, Literature.  
Inteligencia artificial, creación, ficción, lectura, educación, literatura.

## 1. Introduction

In the last short decade since the introduction of the Transformer architecture, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has grown from a niche concept to “the biggest revolution since the invention of internet – perhaps since the second industrial revolution” (Guterres, 2024). The question of whether “computing machines” can think was first published by Turing (1966) along with his seminal work on the eponymous Turing Test and would be later formalized as “AI” in a research proposal by McCarthy et al. (1955). But it has been only recently with the introduction of the “pre-train, prompt, and predict” paradigm (Liu et al., 2023) that AI has reached the hands of regular, non-technical users.

But what does it mean for a machine to be “intelligent”? “Intelligence”, from the Latin “*intellegere*”, means “to recognize”, “to understand”, as in the literal translation “*inter*” = between and “*legere*” = read, i.e. to choose between something – an ability that is quantifiable and can be tested. Communication sciences define artificial intelligence as “the tangible real-world capability of non-human machines or artificial entities to perform, task solve, communicate, interact, and act logically as it occurs with biological humans” (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2024). This does not imply that the machine is able to understand, but rather to put things together in a way that makes sense to the observer, as illustrated by Searle’s “Chinese room experiment” (1980): a person sits in a room with access to a vast set of rules on how to put together Chinese signs despite the person having never learned the language. An observer outside the room with access to nothing but the Chinese signs themselves may believe the person inside understands Chinese, whereas the person is doing nothing but following a rigid set of rules without any insight on their underlying meaning.

These definitions of intelligence focus on the capability to solve clearly defined tasks while neglecting that intelligence is often connected to creativity – either as a manifestation of intelligence, as overlapping concepts, or even as identical (Sternberg & O’Hara, 1998). However, definitions of creativity often also include the way in which it arises, its process, “a kind of making that produces something which is original” (Gaut, 2003). Recent developments of AI have forced us to emphasize creative aspects (Gero et al., 2025) even if it is still under debate whether or under which conditions AI-generated works can be considered creative. Beyond criteria such as skill, beauty, or emotional appeal, creativity is often regarded as a decisive criterion for art, an emphasis that became particularly pronounced during the twentieth century and gave rise to numerous new art forms (Scharf, 1974), but may be “the bottleneck” for AI (Jiang et al., 2022, p. 10).

This article discusses one specific aspect of AI-generated output, which is often framed as creative or artistic: the creation of written fiction, in our case for self-consumption, and how cheap and/or free access to these technologies is disrupting key aspects of social life, starting from the role of an individual in their society and their connection to their peers down to the satisfaction of personal wants and needs. Instead of professional(ly marketed) literature, we made fiction for self-consumption the focus of our study because it reveals the type of social changes that can be expected from the introduction of generative AI technologies in the daily lives of users who have neither asked for these technologies nor have been taught on how to better integrate them as a positive force in their daily lives. Engaging with this topic is likely to be of considerable value for educators dealing with the disruption caused by these technologies in their routines and who, as with the irruption of cell phones and social media in educative contexts, may not be prepared to adequately guide their students through these changes.

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The literature drawn upon for this study originates from a range of different fields, including classical and new sources. As our contribution is oriented more toward future developments than toward present conditions, the literature often includes works that address other, potentially comparable phenomena. This necessarily entails engaging with fundamental questions – such as those concerning the quality of democracy or the nature of creativity – not so much with the aim of resolving them, but rather of critically weighing and contextualizing them.

As a framework, we cannot address AI-generated fiction without first addressing the evaluation of reading fiction itself. The value of fiction has been debated for millennia: Socrates rejected the act of writing itself assuming that everything put down on paper would fail to be internalized. His disciple Plato regarded reading fiction as a potentially dangerous activity because it stresses emotions instead of reason and may lead to an inability to distinguish between reality and imagination (Worth, 2004). Aristotle however, understood it as a

way to experience catharsis and a form of “moral development” (Cain, 2005). Yet, only in the last few decades reading fiction became a topic of active research, as our current societal knowledge is fed by both works of fiction and non-fiction alike. Reading is a popular hobby for a considerable part of societies worldwide (Fleck, 2024) and it fosters learning in a pleasant and effective way (Denham, 2024; Knight, 2019). Fiction can teach us, near imperceptibly, about history, geography, society, etc. and even alternative perspectives on life. It can foster creativity and confront us with new ideas, e.g. on how we imagine the future or how we define and work on our identity (Parsons, 2013; Roza & Guimarães, 2022). Through reading, we can become more mindful and optimistic, reduce negative emotions such as anxiety and depression (Arslan et al., 2022; Peterkin & Grewal, 2017), and train the expression of emotional states (Lysaker & Sedberry, 2015). The “Theory of mind” refers to the ability to reason about mental states, both own and other people’s, and it has been shown that fictional literature can facilitate the development of empathy (Djikic et al., 2009, p. 28).

Books sometimes also confront us with unexpected aspects or with difficult topics we would usually avoid but it is through reading that we approach them from a safe distance and in a controlled way (Smuts, 2007, with regard to film) and eventually feel a specific connection to other people, not just empathizing with the characters in the book but also feeling connected to the author and other recipients who may experience similar feelings – making us feel good about these experiences both by themselves but also as a meta emotion (Feagin, 1983). And since reading a book requires a deeper cognitive engagement for a longer period of time, we can assume that reading achieves these objectives in a deeper way than watching movies.

Thus, reading enables us to learn, to train our empathy, feel connected, and manage our emotions. It is an important activity occupying a privileged position in our daily lives. But what happens once AI-generated books enter the picture? Does the situation look different from conventional books? Derived from our empirical findings and theoretical engagement with the topic, our framework focuses on several dynamics that are likely to be most affected by AI.

### 3. Methodology

The main challenge in approaching our subject is that the situation under investigation – the widespread use of generative AI for the creation of fiction – has not yet fully materialized. Therefore, our analysis necessarily relies on assumptions, informed in part by analogies to comparable developments. In addition to a literature review, these assumptions are grounded in a triangulation of methods intended to offset the limitations of individual approaches, namely interviews, participant observation, and a survey.

As a basis, nearly twenty people took part in informal, in-person group interviews that have been conducted in early 2025 in the context of university seminars. The participants were both creators and students of media studies, all of them interested in generative AI, as they had not only enrolled in the course but also attended sessions voluntarily. The interviews were deliberately open and conversational in nature, allowing participants to freely articulate their perspectives and concerns. As is common in face-to-face interviews, however, the social desirability bias may have influenced responses, for example by encouraging participants to frame technological developments in more positive terms.

To gain an emic perspective and deepen our understanding of the motivations and concerns surrounding the use of generative AI, we also engaged in the practice itself by working with such systems over several months and regularly reflecting on our experiences. While this approach, that could be designated as a short participant observation, provides insights into real life experiences, it is limited by the fact that it reflects the perspectives of only two people with a shared academic interest in the topic, which may introduce bias.

Building on insights from the literature, the informal interviews, and our own experiences, we designed and administered an online survey in June 2025 among 65 students at a German university (aged 19 to 27), all of whom self-identified as media-savvy. The survey was written in a relatively informal tone to foster an open atmosphere and encourage participants to express their views freely. The online format ensured a higher degree of anonymity and allowed respondents more time to reflect on the questions, albeit at the cost of a less natural context. It became apparent that one third of respondents have been aware of the possibility of generating personalized fictional texts using AI; of these, about half reported that they would consider doing so in the future, while none had yet engaged in the practice. The survey led to very similar results like the interviews and the experience from the participant observation, which is illustrated in the findings.

The interviews, participant observation, and survey must be understood in relation to the current real-world context, in which generative AI is advancing rapidly. Existing research, as well as popular sources have so far mainly focused on professional authors. While our contribution sets a different focus, it is not possible to exclude them entirely, as the boundaries between professional and non-professional authorship are fluid. It has been spoken loudly against AI creations, referring to them as “slop”, expressing distaste for anything AI, and even forcing creative companies to implement stronger anti-AI policies (Adarlo, 2023; Madsen & Puyt, 2026). This unpopularity or even animosity highlights the relevance of this topic in our daily lives. Even if many creators apparently reject AI, indicators point towards an exponential increase in the number of AI-written works. While commercial publishers were the first to be overwhelmed by submissions with “an honest interest in being published, but not in having to do the actual work” (Clarke, 2023; Kan, 2023) the presence of AI-generated works is since expanding to every other creative forum.

Based on a content analysis of the results of the aforementioned approaches, we selected our core concepts by identifying concepts most likely to be impacted by AI and examined assumptions that need to be (dis)proven, also informed by hindsight from earlier milestones – from the printing press to the psychological effects of social media – while there is still time to steer its course. The final set of concepts comprises democratization, customization and filter bubbles, connection and solitude, creativity, and the effects of these technologies on professionals.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Democratization

Discussions of generative AI often focus on its accessibility, as an increasing number of people can use it with minimal prior knowledge. Thus, as it was remarked by all interviewees and survey participants, it offers a huge potential to engage and participate in fields like personal entertainment and education. While generating useful prompts has become a new professional field by itself, it is not a given that a simpler prompt leads to a poorer output. So, if it is now possible for everyone to create fiction, an activity that until now has been the exclusive domain of people who had the skill, education, and the time to do so, then it is only reasonable for AI to be described as democratizing.

Yet, when talking about the democratization of AI it is often forgotten to note that a major part of the world’s population has no access to this technology (putting them at a disadvantage in multiple fields), that the AI may not consider their perspectives, aesthetics, values, opinions, and life realities and, even worse, that products from their cultural context can be used to feed the AI without letting them benefit from it in any way. With this unequal distribution it is impossible for AI to lead to any representative plurality of voices. Therefore, on a global scale, it can be defined as profoundly undemocratic. This was also acknowledged by nearly all interviewees and survey participants.

Then, if we only focus on relatively rich areas, we should ask whether a democratizing process should be thought of as a positive outcome? People socialized in so-called Western countries tend to see democracy as the best way of creating our lives, but it can be evaluated differently. Plato referred to Athenian democracy as an unstable form of governing, stating that democracies follow citizens’ impulses and desires without considering the common good (Kofmel, 2008). In his play “Demetrius” (1805), Friedrich Schiller decries “What is the majority? Majority is nonsense, reason has only ever been with a few. Votes should be weighed and not counted; the state must perish, early or late, where the majority wins and ignorance decides”. Winston Churchill would popularize the quote that “Democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time”. The paradox of tolerance (Pasamonk, 2004) has further shown how easily democratic ideals can lead the idea of democracy *ad absurdum*, creating breeding ground for forms of infiltration such as fake news and populism.

However, if we want to quit political theory and see democracy as the best among all evils, and focus on the individual person prompting and reading, they would get literature according to their wishes. Therefore, we can assume that they would no longer read many books that (also) deal with topics of more general interest. We have seen such a development before with the rise of social media and the filter bubbles that algorithms create from users’ reception patterns causing socially important topics to be completely lost or distorted (Haidt, 2024) and whose lessons we have not yet fully learned. Even worse, some individual desires may be destructive for democracy or society.

Conventional books, however, are not free of criticism, as has been noted by several interviewees: the decision of which books are published and circulate is taken by an elite – not only publishers who both anticipate and shape the taste of the readers, deciding in the process what counts as “valuable”, but also by shops, literature critics, journalists, government authorities, and teachers. This may ensure that there is a common ground, a canon of books people know or at least have heard about, and that some topics perceived as important or noteworthy by this elite are covered. Such books benefit from careful contextualization (McLeod, 2013) and modern re-readings (e.g. under feminist and postcolonial perspectives). Nonetheless, we are still talking about an elitist process where only people with high education and high positions decide which books are to receive special treatment and where individuals with diverse topics and perspectives feel unrepresented (Barrios-Johnson, n.d.). Muddying the waters even more, we must also consider that a huge number of fictional texts already exist, even if commercially rather unsuccessful, and that there is a limited number of works that an average person can actually read in their lifetime (Chesterman, 2024).

Thus, while offering the chance of participation, individually generated fiction is likely to further hinder the spread of shared stories, destroying in the process social glue, a sense of shared identity, and connectedness, and therefore may not be able to help stabilize successful democracies that draw on shared stories (Haidt, 2022).

#### 4.2. Customization and Filter Bubbles

For an individual who creates a book primarily or exclusively for themselves, the result may lead to stronger affective responses (Worth, 2004) and more relevant experiences than buying a traditional book. The reader of a custom-made book can decide, for instance, that they would like to be educated in an entertaining way on a topic that is interesting to them. An interviewee gave the example, that they could easily prompt a story to take place at a certain colonial time and place when women played a significantly different role in society, and have these concepts integrated into a thriller – and consequently get a tailor-made, individually captivating and educating story. But just like with the development in social media, it may be more realistic to expect users to primarily prompt stories from their own filter bubble, prompting according to their own interests, their own character traits, likes, dislikes etc.: as seen with social media trends, someone who enjoys romantic stories with a happy ending is more likely to prompt corresponding stories, someone who is interested in cosplay may get deeper into the field, but their output may become redundant and not offer many new insights, thus lacking some important aspects traditional fiction usually offers by being more unforeseeable, thus, as remarked by a survey participant, less helpful.

On the other hand, by the same process of customization, users can ensure that individually stressful topics appear in a manner of their choosing or, alternatively, not at all. Avoiding certain topics reminds on the central Freudian term of repression, a defensive inhibition of painful up to unbearable topics (Byrne et al., 1963; Freud, 1917). A person may e.g. not want their story to include something general such as violence if they have been through a painful event including the same, but it can be also very specific aspects they want to avoid such as highways, if they recently witnessed a terrible accident on a highway. In usual fiction, it may be difficult to fully anticipate and avoid some triggers, particularly when said triggers are also tropes of certain genres the same way murderers are notorious in detective stories. However, the individual handling of such topics does not have to be about full avoidance but can be about gradual exposure, by having the individual control about how and in which way people want to occupy themselves with triggering topics (Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021). Here, some interviewees and survey participants remarked that it may be individually beneficial. This is supported by psychoanalysis: under these circumstances we no longer talk about “repression” but rather of “suppression”: whereas “repression” is described as a defence mechanism operating subconsciously protecting individuals from stress (Kumari, 2024), “suppression” is a flexible and adaptive coping strategy, associated with greater resilience and better mental health (Oh et al., 2019). The ability to suppress negative emotions is related to the number and importance of daily positive events (Newman & Nezlek, 2022). By consciously deciding if and in how far one wants to be confronted with a trigger, people can cater for the best individual outcome of their reading.

Personal education, as well as the use of AI-generated fiction to avoid or gradually expose oneself to a topic depends on the individual’s ability to handle AI. It is conceivable that some people have an intuitive knowledge of AI’s potential, but it is more likely that proper information is key. If somebody e.g. has never

heard of feminism it is very unlikely that they can educate themselves on the topic. The same refers to repressed (instead of suppressed) topics.

#### 4.3. Solitude and Connection

In the face of countless individual creations that erode shared stories once forming our social glue and the basis for our cultural identity, it is assumable that the feelings of connectedness and belonging are weakened. Individuals may have a smaller base of shared topics to talk about, and the loss of empathy and increased individualism can easily lead to a withdrawal into solitude, known to be an important risk to individual health and a significant contributor to depression (Erzen & Çikrikci, 2018; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). With interviewees, survey participants, and research pointing out to the proliferation of social media and smartphones as the triggers for an epidemic of loneliness and mental illness (Haidt, 2024) we may not talk about a phenomenon in the near future but rather about a problem that's already among us. This aspect was regarded with particular critical attention by nearly all interviewees and survey participants.

However, the lost feeling of connectedness to other individuals can be displaced towards a greater sense of connectedness between individuals and their individually-prompted fiction, as they can establish deeper parasocial relationships “mediated by the personal relevance of the story” (Liebers & Schramm, 2017) where the writer-and-future-reader can prompt in such a way as to better empathize or identify with the characters in their fiction, increasing the joy they get from reading it and even potentially training social skills thanks to the deeper involvement in the creative process. On the other hand, the “personas” that such work would create could be nothing but reflections of the author themselves, creating yet another filter bubble (Allen, 2011) and hinder rather than foster practicing real empathy which was seen critical by most survey participants.

Still, as a central outcome of the participant observation, generating fiction with characters that are very similar to oneself could nonetheless have positive effects: by seeing oneself from the outside – as a persona in a piece of fiction – one can gain a more objective view and eventually better assess one's situation, strengths, and weaknesses. Unlike usual criticism, fiction could come around in a more pleasant way and therefore be more acceptable to the individual.

Beyond the pure individual level, looking at how people read traditional, not-AI-generated fiction, it becomes obvious that reading is not necessarily a purely solitary experience: people like communicating about fiction, be it in book clubs or among friends, and feel connected to the author in an activity that Kivy and Meskin (2019) call “closely analogous to a conversation” and which was confirmed by several survey participants. If a user generates their own fiction, it is still possible that practices of sharing continue which could become helpful to articulate oneself better and thus contribute to an increased mutual understanding. It remains to be seen whether and how the habit of sharing fiction increases or decreases with the rise of AI-generated works.

#### 4.4. Creativity (and the lack of it)

There is little doubt that highly original and sophisticated prompts can be formulated, demonstrating originality and legitimately qualifying as creative – which was also acknowledged by nearly all interviewees and survey participants. Moreover, if ready-mades are considered creative, the same must be assumed for AI-generated fiction. In this context, creativity resides primarily in acts of contextualization. The feeling of being creative can be experienced as fun and fulfilling (Dang, 2019) and thus, as beneficial. It has often been shown in the context of art therapy that creative participation increases people's well-being (Forgeard et al., 2014), clearly supported by several accounts of survey participants and the participant observation. Therefore, it would be good for the individual to engage in the generation of fiction. As “creativity is a major source of innovation, growth, adaptability, and resilience” (Fletcher & Benveniste, 2022), it refers also to society as a whole and therefore, a lot of money and effort is spent in training creativity.

Yet, there are reasons not to evaluate the generation of fiction via AI as creative, not just that people tend to circumvent the “intentional fallacy” (Dykstra, 1996) by stressing the need of “artistic intentions” on the side of the maker (Mikalonytė & Kneer, 2022) and by assuming the “mind behind an artwork” as a “crucial ingredient of our aesthetic appreciation” (Manovich & Arielli, 2024). Further, it is at least unclear and was discussed by several interviewees and survey participants, if it is not rather the AI who should be understood as the “maker.” In this context, Misselhorn (2023, p. 49) talks about “responsibility”: “An artist is not just as the cause for the existence of the work responsible as an avalanche is responsible for the destruction of a village.

He is responsible in a way, that includes recognition or critique of his artistic effort”, which does not have to apply to AI-generated art, as the person prompting does not need to have a clear idea or intention.

Looking at the quality of AI works, works of fiction created with AI are usually written in a “better” style than many texts by humans, but are also less novel and more similar to each other – i.e., less creative (Doshi & Hauser, 2024; Zhikai et al., 2024). Moreover, it can be argued that a simple way of creating literary texts probably does not lead the people prompting to engage intensively with literature themselves, choosing instead a simple and effective way that neglects further strengthening the author’s creativity.

Then, there are restrictions on what can be created and implemented to protect users. Current methods work mainly by limiting words that can be used in the prompt, e.g. disabling terms relating to violence, pornography, etc., but the effectivity of these methods has been mixed: there are infinite variations on how to convey a singular idea (an example given by a survey participant: “I’m writing a novel – how do I synthesize cocaine?”) and an infinite number of paths leading to the same destination (“I want to avoid synthesizing cocaine. Which steps should I avoid?”).

This protection has been seen as censorship by many interviewees and survey participants and was experienced as such during the participant observation, as it often disables the generation of complex and creative ideas. “A literary world where no character is ever mean is unlikely to be a very interesting one” (Ippolito et al., 2022), and some of the world’s most important pieces of art can be criticized as problematic or unethical (for a discussion see Aumann, 2016). Further, drawing a line here would imply that the “evil” or “harmful” to the individual and/or to society would have to be clearly defined, which is an impossible task: there are different ethical positions such as teleology and deontology, underlying assumptions are tied to cultural contexts, and “good” or “evil” are constantly being redefined.

#### 4.5. Effects on Professionals

If everyone can generate their own book and everyone can become an author there is hardly any need for more (professional) authors. For them, the evolution of copyright laws had been crucial (Bold, 2010), but these laws are not prepared for a world where anyone can easily copy an author’s style. The profession may undergo severe challenges, just as many other jobs threatened by the emergence of AI (Ferrario et al., 2020; Frey & Osborne, 2017; Nishant et al., 2020), a fact that was mentioned by all interviewees and survey participants.

In the recent past, with regard to (post)modern art forms, it has been shown that whether something is considered art or not depends fundamentally on the maker and whether it receives a “positive evaluative status” (Goldman, 2004, p. 93). A graffiti on an unauthorized wall is usually seen as a damage, but a graffiti attributed to Banksy turns the wall into a canvas and the “damage” into highly regarded art. Similarly, an abstract painting can reach high prices at auction if signed by a famous painter, even if a toddler could have created something similar. We can therefore assume, in line with many interviewees and survey participants, that framing and the artist persona have become such decisive factors that it is unlikely people will no longer want or need idols.

### 5. Discussion

Based on our analysis, AI generated literature enables personalized storytelling, creative experimentation, and self-reflection. However, it comes with trade-offs. On a societal level, democratized access to AI-generation technologies in its current form does not necessarily lead, somewhat paradoxically, to a more democratic society by weakening shared stories. Many pitfalls mostly concern people who are already underprivileged. This refers to the digital divide, not only with regard to people who do not have access to the hard- and software, but also to people who do not have a good education which supports them in using AI the best way – effectively and responsibly and with an informed awareness of its risks and limitations. This includes especially elderly people who did not get the chance to learn about AI, as well as people whose school education, job trainings etc. did not offer appropriate insights into the field. Beyond technical proficiency in using AI, individuals with limited general knowledge are also disadvantaged. Although it may be tempting to assume that AI renders education obsolete – why learn or research independently when AI can do so more quickly and efficiently? – this development in fact underscores the importance of education understood as broadly internalized knowledge. Further, AI may contribute to the digital

divide by implicitly shaping users' value systems in culturally misaligned ways and by reinforcing individual insecurities and limitations.

Yet, there are many potential benefits within easy reach: with the help of AI generated fiction, people can easily educate themselves in customized ways, can work on their psychological issues, evaluate themselves "from the outside" through characters similar to themselves that they have prompted, establish meaningful connections to train empathy, eventually even establish new ways of cooperation. Being or experiencing oneself as creative is more open to everyone than ever. These individual benefits are also positive for society as a whole.

However, it needs some steps to make people and society benefit from the technology: users should be instructed on how to use AI-generation systems for their personal improvement and the behavior of these systems could be tweaked to include, at least by default, new perspectives and wider horizons. Putting knowledge on how to better use AI in the hands of its users seems like the next step in personal education, much like office-suite training has dominated computer education over the past 20 years.

Against this backdrop, the role of the author will inevitably change, and pathways to publication may become more challenging. Social media have enabled new forms of writing and reception and digital platforms oriented towards amateur writers have thrived already before the advent of AI (Vadde, 2017, p. 33). Yet, this mostly takes place against a specific background – usually one with established characters and settings that serve as basis for new stories or digressions. Whether similar groups emerge with regard to AI fiction and if the average user will be interested in them remains to be seen. Just as fan fiction, AI fiction may "require us to revisit how institutional histories of literature have constituted distinctions between amateur and professional creativity and whether those distinctions still hold today" (Vadde, 2017, p. 48). This, however, does not imply the end of the author as such: admiration for heroes and geniuses has characterized human societies since at least the era of Roman gladiators, and it appears unlikely that AI will displace the author as a central cultural figure.

## 6. Conclusion

This is not a lament about the "good old times" without AI. As demonstrated, generative AI can support personal development with regard to knowledge, psychological well-being, and social skills, and facilitate individuals' capacities to participate effectively in society. However, AI generation may also accelerate the digital divide – not only between so-called "developed countries" and the rest of the world, but also among peers in comparatively rich countries, as those with stronger general knowledge are better able to produce literature that is more useful for their own learning, such as educating themselves on important topics or mastering specific literary styles.

This underscores the responsibility of society to ensure universal access to high-quality general education, which must include a comprehensive understanding of AI, how it functions, what it can achieve, and its limitations. Moreover, the balance between "protection" and "censorship" should be foregrounded in a continuous public discourse, addressing the role AI should occupy in society before such decisions are effectively made by technological or commercial forces and constantly reevaluating them. Given the rapid pace of technological advancement, these questions demand immediate and careful consideration within societal debate.

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